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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire survey of 982 people in 4 shopping malls in the Piedmont region of South Carolina sought to assess public attitudes about the quality of public and private schools, proposed federal tuition tax credit legislation, tax support for private schools, and outcomes should tuition tax credits be adopted. Respondents were asked to "grade" the schools in their community; data were also gathered on awareness of and attitudes toward tuition tax credits, attitudes toward public aid for private education, and social and demographic characteristics (including sex, age, race, religion, income, and political affiliation). Statistical analysis using frequencies, crosstabulations, and chi-squares yielded a number of findings. Among the results were that blacks expressed less confidence in private schools than whites, religious groups without private schools were more critical of public schools than religious groups with private schools, younger adults were more likely to support aid to private schools than were older adults, more males than females and more whites than blacks supported tuition tax credits, more respondents opposed such credits than favored them, and more whites than blacks believed such credits would increase private school enrollment. A copy of the questionnaire is appended. (RW)

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A Regional Study of Attitudes Toward Public Schools, Private Schools and Tuition Tax Credits

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EA 015 692

April, 1983

A REGIONAL STUDY OF ATTITUDES TOWARD PUBLIC SCHOOLS, PRIVATE SCHOOLS AND TUITION TAX CREDITS

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April 1983

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword iii

Introduction, Limitations, Delimitations, Need for the Study, Design of the Study and Treatment of the Data 1

Review of Related Literature 7

Analysis of Data 14

Summary and Conclusion 30

Recommendations 35

Bibliography 36

Appendix 38

FOREWORD

Educational policies in the United States are in a state of flux; important changes are under consideration at every level of decision making. One of these important changes has to do with public support of private schools, especially the question of whether tuition tax credits should be adopted as public policy. In a time of scarcity of economic resources for public institutions this policy question becomes a crucial issue.

The writers of this report sensed the need for a regional study to examine:

1. attitudes toward the quality of public and private schools
2. the level of support for public funding of private schools
3. perceived outcomes should tuition tax credits be adopted as public policy.

Good policy decisions are responsive to public values and desires. The findings of this study will be provided decision makers at local, state, and federal levels in the hope that due consideration will be given to the findings derived from the study.

A task such as this study presents cannot be accomplished without the efforts of numerous individuals. Therefore, acknowledgement is expressed to: the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Clemson University for providing the resources necessary to complete the study; Myra Armistead, Research Librarian, Cooper Library, Clemson University; Ann Alewine, Ann Atkinson, Kathy Crocker, Loretta Moore, Gene Price, John Pruitt, Betty Scott, Wayne Self, and Lloyd Weaver, graduate students who served as research

assistants; Renee Gaines, Gregg Monson, Ginger Smith, Paula Spivey and Carol Yockey, managers of areas malls where study was conducted; Dr. Hoke Hill, Statistician, Clemson University; and Penni Seibert, our typist

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INTRODUCTION

Few areas of public policy undergo as much ongoing scrutiny as the policies that are used as the basis for operating the public schools of this country. There are ongoing debates concerning such policy issues as the quality of schools, the kinds of schools, how schooling should be funded, who should go to what kind of school and what kind of involvement should be encouraged with reference to the various levels of government regarding the development and administration of these policies. The amount of discussion in the mass media and professional literature concerning the quality of public education has escalated the debate as to whether public money should be used to fund private schools as a way of improving schooling in today's society.

This research project was designed to assess public attitudes toward the quality of public and private schooling in the Piedmont Region of South Carolina. Another important objective was to measure the degree of awareness of adults in the region to proposed tuition tax credit legislation, attitudes toward the major policy issue of general tax support for private schools, and acceptance or rejection of tuition tax credit policy.

Limitations

In this study limitations are defined as those factors over which the authors exercised no control. Those factors are as follows:

1. degree of public awareness and media attention on the issues involved in the study at the time this study was conducted,
2. the sample of population in the shopping mall at the time the study was conducted,

3. the sample of the population in shopping malls who would choose to participate by responding to the survey instrument,

4. respondent's private interpretation of items in the survey instrument.

Delimitations

Delimitations are defined as those factors over which the authors exercised some degree of control. Those factors included:

1. when the study was conducted,
2. the time frame in which the study was conducted,
3. the nature of the survey instrument,
4. the issues chosen by the researchers to be included on the survey instrument,
5. the procedures used and personnel involved in conducting the survey,
6. the methods used in the analyses of the data,
7. the author's interpretation of the data.

Need for the Study

The policy impact resulting from adopting tuition tax credits or other forms of financial support for private schools could significantly affect residents of South Carolina. Private school enrollments have tripled in this state since 1960. Should policies approving a shift of public resources from public to private schools be forthcoming, the detrimental effects on public schools could be particularily crucial given the extreme limitations of financial resources at this point in time. A shift in public dollars from public to private schools would affect public schools in general but would significantly affect those schools in areas of the nation such as South Carolina who have traditionally received proportionately larger amounts of their budgets from federal revenue.

Based on the preceding realities, the researchers believed that there was a need for a study to determine levels of awareness in the Piedmont section of South Carolina concerning proposed policies and the perceived effect that the adoption of these policies might have on public schools in the area. The researchers also anticipated that school leaders in the area could benefit from information gathered on attitudes of adults toward public and private schools in the region. Such information regarding the people's attitudes and level of support for proposed policy changes could help direct the decisions and behaviors of not only school leaders but policy makers who will make the final decisions.

Design of the Study

The study was designed to achieve the following objectives:

1. to engage a representative sample of adults in the Piedmont Region of South Carolina in a school attitude survey,
2. to determine how this representative sample would grade public and private schools in the area and public schools nationally,
3. to determine the level of awareness among adults of proposed tuition tax credit legislation,
4. to determine how adults participating in the study view general tax support and tuition tax credits,
5. to determine the perceived effects of adopting tuition tax credits on public school enrollments,
6. to weight the effects of various demographic factors (sex, age, race, religion, income and political affiliation) on the above stated attitudes and perceptions.

A survey instrument was designed by the researchers to achieve the above stated objectives. The design followed the recommendations of Phi Delta Kappa's school survey materials and the basic format of the Annual Phi Delta Kappa Gallup Poll. (2)(9) The instrument was reviewed by a professional statistician for appropriate design and utility in collecting and analyzing the data.

Permission was granted by managers of regional shopping malls in Anderson, Greenville, Greenwood and Spartanburg, South Carolina to conduct the survey in each of the above shopping malls. The survey was conducted on two successive weekends in late October, 1982. The survey was conducted by the authors and seven graduate students from the College of Education of Clemson University who were trained by the researchers in the procedures used in conducting the survey. Informational materials concerning the nature of the research project were posted in high traffic areas of each mall where the study was conducted.

Treatment of the Data

The data collected in this study were analyzed at the Academic Computer Center at Clemson University. The Statistical Analysis System was utilized. The specific portion of the system utilized in this study was the Chi Square Analysis. (25)(26) In reporting results of contingency table analysis, row and column effects which are reported to be dependent are statistically significant at the alpha = 0.05 level.

The instrument used to collect the data was composed of two distinct sections. The first section centered around nine questions relating to:

1. grades given schools,
2. awareness of and attitudes toward tax support of private schools,

3. projected outcomes should tuition tax credits be adopted as public policy.

The second section consisted of questions designed to gather demographic characteristics of the respondents (See Appendix A).

The first type of data computed was simple tally counts for each of the responses in the questionnaire. These counts are included on the instrument which is presented as Appendix A. In referring to this data the reader may note discrepencies in numbers for different responses. There was a total of 982 respondents who participated in the study. However, on some issues some participants chose not to respond.

The second type of data computed were two-way contingency table analysis in which demographic factors were treated as dependent variables and informational items as independent variables. The last type of data analysis consisted of three-way contengency tables analyzing information questions times demographic factors times attitudinal factors. These analyses resulted in numerous tables. The section of this report entitled "Analysis of the Data" was based on the organization of the data around four major areas as follows:

1. grading of public and private schools,
2. effects of demographic factors on grading schools,
3. awareness of and attitudes toward private schools,
4. perceived outcomes should tuition tax credits become public policy.

The treatment of the data resulted in a large number of contingency tables consisting of the numbers and percentages of responses by row and column and the results of the Chi Square Analysis. Due to the

volume of data generated, the writers chose not to report these numbers and percentages but chose to summarize the outcomes of each analysis and to present these outcomes in Appendix B.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The relationship between private schools and public governmental units has been a source of major controversy since colonial times. Society has constantly debated whether private schools should be controlled and funded by public governments. Historically, First Amendment principles relating to separation of church and state have been used as sources of guidance in developing public policies regarding private schools. But, what separation of church and state means varies with the times. Based on this political reality, there has been and will continue to be an ongoing controversy. Certainly, a major portion of this debate has dealt with whether public funds can be used to support private education. The process of developing policy has been evolutionary in nature, and compromises have been reached along the way. Policies utilizing "child benefit principles" are an excellent example of this evolutionary process. More recently the debate has shifted from further development of specific child benefit principles to a more general type of child benefit principle, namely tuition tax credits.

Increased dissatisfaction with public schooling has stimulated interest in creating ways to make private schools a more available option. For residents in the South no public issue has been more controversial than the desegregation of public schools. During the process of elimination of the dual system of schools many parents in this region sought refuge for their children in private schools (20:391). This has resulted in not only an increase in the number of private schools but also an increase in the percentage of children of school age who attend

these schools (21:61). In South Carolina, for example, there has been a significant increase in the number of private schools, and the number of pupils attending these schools has tripled during the period 1960-1980 (24:11).

Concern for religious socialization is another factor contributing to the growth of private schools. As a matter of faith many parents reject values they see public schools perpetuating. There is some evidence that these concerns are separate from school desegregation issues (20:391). In addition, there is widespread conviction that if a school is private it is automatically better. This perception coupled with the conviction that education is the best investment that a parent can make to improve his child's chances for success in life has led many people to place their children in private schools even though they may be public school people at heart (29:14).

More recent debate over support for private schools has focused on tuition tax credits as the most viable option. It is not unusual for citizens to look to public authorities to adopt policies that will improve their lives and those of their children. As cited earlier an increasing number of parents have already cast their vote by choosing private education for their children. In 1960 only 5.8 percent of the total school enrollment in South Atlantic states were enrolled in private schools. By 1980 this figure has increased to 8.7 percent (21:61). As a result of recent research conducted by Cooper and McLaughlin it is now estimated that there are at least 15,000 non-Catholic private schools serving approximately 2,000,000 children. These researchers also estimate that the rate of growth for these schools is approximately

100,000 pupils each year (7). Diversity characterizes these non-Catholic private schools. Large numbers of pupils are now attending Lutheran schools, evangelical Christian schools, independent schools, and other types of religious and non-sectarian schools (13:274). It should also be noted that even though there has been a decline in the number of Catholic schools in the nation, the southern region is experiencing an increase in both the number of Catholic schools and the number of pupils enrolled in these schools as the population of Catholics in the area increases (5:C2). This growth in the number of institutions and the number of students enrolled in these institutions has stimulated a greater interest in tuition tax credits as a way to help facilitate participation of an increasing number of children in alternatives to public school.

Other reasons for the increased interest in public funding for private schools is expressed in trends in the federal education budget. The current administration favors consolidation of categorical grants into block grants to eliminate federal regulations. The administration has also proposed fewer federal dollars to be spent by state and local education agencies as a way to reduce federal control (16:451). This attempted effort to reduce federal control of education has been accompanied by other efforts to increase individual citizen options regarding the choices they make concerning the education of their children. Instead of providing federal dollars to established public education agencies, the present administration seems to prefer that funds be given in an indirect manner to individuals through reductions in federal tax payments (22:10).

If public policy creates additional options for parents regarding the

education of their children, this raises many questions about the role that states must assume in carrying out their responsibilities to regulate that education. The problem is already apparent in a number of states that are in the process of evaluating educational policy regarding the states' relationships with private schools. Massachusetts citizens were asked to vote on a constitutional amendment that would have permitted state aid to private school students (1:15). The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to consider whether state tax deductions can be provided parents of private school children in the state of Minnesota (3:1). In Michigan, litigation has resulted from public schools providing supplemental instruction to private school students (4:4). Another major issue is whether a state has a right to require minimum curriculum standards for private schools (17:9). These controversies over state regulation of private schools serve as examples of the many debates occuring in almost every state at the present time.

Any study of attitudes toward tuition tax credits and general public aid for private schools would need to review the typical arguments proponents and opponents made regarding public funding of private schools. One argument states that taxpayers who send their children to private schools suffer from a double tax burden (27:1). Others argue that it is the function of government in a democracy to encourage options for parents in the education of their children (19:275). Others have supported some type of aid for private schools because of the perceived quality of the services rendered by these schools (14:1). Some argue that public support of private schools is a wise course of action because if these schools do not receive additional public support they will

be forced to close thus forcing the public schools to accommodate previously enrolled private school students (13:85). An additional argument is made that non-public schools provides a service that contributes to the public good, therefore, justifying public support (13:86).

Recent research supported by James Coleman contends that private schools do a better job of promoting the ideals of equality and quality than do public schools (6:159). Increasingly, minorities view private schools as a better option for achieving better quality of schooling for their children. Increased numbers of minorities in private schools adds additional justification in the minds of some proponents for more public support for private schools (18:15). Arguments such as those cited above have not been accepted without debate.

Persons opposed to public support of private schools have offered many counterarguments. Among these is the claim that funding private schools would make the general delivery of educational services more inefficient. Johns refutes the argument that public schools operate as an inefficient monopoly by suggesting that it is necessary to establish certain types of government approved monopolies in the private economy such as telephone and utility services (12:27). Others argue that private schools mainly serve children from higher income families. A recent report on enrollments in private schools in USA Today confirms that the majority of students in private schools come from such families (15:50). Fege even suggests that tuition tax credits are a subtly disguised "tickle down approach" for the rich (8:18). Support of private schools would be a form of support for private interests

without accompanying public regulation (23). Additional opposition to aid for private schools has centered around separation of church and state principles. It is not appropriate according to this view for the state to be involved in the establishment of religion through public support of church related private schools (12:237). Kimbrough refutes the double tax argument by suggesting that single persons and childless couples pay public school taxes without receiving any direct benefit (13:85).

The current interest in tuition tax credits has generated rather precise arguments against this form of aid for private schools. Senator Ernest Hollings (Democrat, South Carolina) reviews these arguments:

1. there would be a disproportinate amount of aid provided private schools,
2. tuition tax credits would result in funding schools that are operated for purposes that run counter to the public interest,
3. federal budgets can scarcely afford the additional economic burden created by tuition tax credits,
4. tuition tax credits would bring about severe infighting between supporters of public and private schools (10:277-79).

In spite of the opposition that proposed tuition tax credit legislation has had in previous sessions of congress, President Reagan has introduced a tuition tax credit bill to both the ninety-seventh and the ninety-eighth sessions of Congress. Both proposed bills have been designed to overcome some of the criticisms of public aid in the past such as aiding wealthy families and supporting segregation (28:1,6).

This representative review of the literature confirms the existence of a great diversity of opinion concerning tuition tax credits and public aid to private schools. Before a decision is reached on such a major policy as this, it seems reasonable to believe that studies such as the survey conducted by the present writers should be encouraged in other areas of this nation and the results made available to the policy-makers involved.

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Grades Given Schools in Local Community and Nationwide

A major goal of the study was to determine how the people in the Piedmont section of South Carolina perceive the quality of public schools both locally and nationally. Since the research project was also designed to determine attitudes toward the quality of private schools and toward allocating various forms of aid to private schools the researchers wanted to examine if people's attitudes toward public schools affected their views on private schools. In examining the literature it was determined that other researchers had utilized the grading scale "A" through "F" normally used in grading pupils in public schools. It was assumed that the people in the sample would be familiar with this grading scale. Thus, a decision was made to use this scale in having respondents evaluate schools.

Another objective of the study was to determine which of several demographic factors could be significant in affecting public attitudes toward schools. The data was analyzed on the basis of seven demographic factors including sex, race, age, religious preference, educational level, income, and political affiliation. The data was also analyzed to determine if having children of school age and if place of school enrollment affected the respondent's attitudes.

The following table summarizes the ratings assigned schools by the respondents in the survey.

TABLE ONE

Rating of Public and Private Schools

		Ratings Given						
		A	B	C	D	F	Don't Know	Total
Ratings Given Local Public Schools	No.	125	334	319	120	30	53	981
	%	12.7	34.0	32.5	12.2	3.1	5.5	100%
Ratings Given Public Schools Nationally	No.	37	264	433	143	28	77	982
	%	3.8	26.9	44.1	14.6	2.8	7.8	100%
Ratings Given Private Schools	No.	184	344	144	64	30	212	978
	%	18.9	35.2	14.7	6.6	3	21.6	100%

The data provided in Table One indicates that residents of the Piedmont section of South Carolina rate their own public schools higher than public schools nationally. They rate private schools locally only slightly higher than their own public schools. The generalization, derived from other studies, that the public tends to consistently give better ratings to private schools is not substantiated in this study. It should be noted though, that a large portion of the sample chose not to grade private schools which may indicate that people in this region are more willing to express opinions regarding public schools than private schools. It is encouraging to observe that forty-six percent of this sample rated their schools above average and only three percent say that their schools deserve failing grades.

When comparing the results of this study with the National Gallup Poll, it was determined that the subjects involved in this study rated their local schools higher than respondents in the national survey where only thirty-seven percent of the sample gave their schools an "A" or "B" rating. Only a slightly smaller percentage of the adults in the Piedmont

section gave "D" or "F" ratings to schools nationally. The same distribution of "C" ratings occurrred in both this regional survey and the 1982 National Gallup Poll (9:37-40).

Effects of Demographic Factors on Grading Schools

Income was a significant factor in grading public schools locally and nationally but had no significant effect on the grading of private schools. More members of higher income groups graded public schools as average than was the case with low income groups. Lower income groups tended to give more A and B grades to public schools.

Educational level of respondents seemed to be highly correlated with the appraisals made of public school quality. Those with higher levels of schooling were less positive concerning the quality of public schools as expressed by the lower grades assigned to their schools. On the other hand those persons with lower levels of schooling had a tendancy to assign higher grades to public schools. All income groups assigned slightly higher grades to private schools than public schools. However, the diversity of the distribution of grades for private schools by educational level is not as great as was the case for public schools. Those with lower levels of schooling graded private schools higher than those with higher levels of schooling. It can also be noted that almost all Whites expressed an opinion about the quality of private schools whereas twenty-eight percent of Blacks refrained from rating private schools. Among the Blacks who did grade private schools there was less confidence expressed in the quality of these schools compared to the level of confidence expressed by Whites.

In analyzing the responses with reference to religion it was determined that there were significant differences in how religious groups responded to the question concerning the quality of local public schools. It would be logical to expect that those religious groups active in establishing private schools would tend to be more critical of public schools than members of other religious groups. The data in this case, however, does not support this expectation. Twenty-four percent of the Methodists, who have very few private schools in the research area, assigned grades of D or F to the public schools, whereas, a significantly smaller percentage of Baptists, who have established the greatest number of private schools in the study region, gave D's and F's. Presbyterians graded public schools higher than any other religious groups included in the study. Religious preference did not appear to significantly effect the grading of private schools.

Adults in different age categories had dissimilar views regarding the quality of local public schools. Those in the 26-45 age range who would be most likely to have children in school gave a larger number of A's and B's than those under age twenty-nine. Surprisingly, 48.6% of the adults 56 and older gave public schools A's and B's. The pattern differs with the grading of public schools nationally. As age level categories increase the percentage of high grades (A and B) assigned increased. Grades assigned to private schools did not appear to be affected by age.

Although political affiliation was a significant factor in grading public schools nationally, it was not a significant variable affecting grades assigned to local public and private schools. Only twenty-four percent of Republicans gave public schools nationally A's and B's whereas

thirty-seven percent of Democrats gave A's and B's. When analyzed by race, political affiliation was an even more important factor. White Republicans gave significantly fewer high grades to public schools nationally than White Democrats.

Having children of school age affected grading of public and private schools. The results of this study are consistent with national surveys that show that adults who have children enrolled in public schools grade them much higher than adults that do not have children in public schools (9:39). In fact, fifty-four percent of the adults in this study with children enrolled in public schools gave local public schools grades of A or B. Only twenty percent of adults with no children of school age gave local public schools grades of A or B.

Awareness of and Attitude Toward
Public Tax Support of Private Schools

The researchers designed the questionnaire in such a way as to determine the attitudes of residents in the Peidmont section of South Carolina toward several crucial issues relating to private schools in the region. These include: (1) whether residents regard the increase in the number of private schools as having a "good" or "bad" effect on education, (2) the degree of awareness residents had of proposed federal legislation to provide some form of tuition tax credits for parents who enroll children in private schools, (3) attitudes toward general tax support for private schools, and (4) attitudes toward providing tuition tax credits with federal tax dollars. Table Two summarizes responses on this issue.

TABLE TWO

Summary of Respondents' Awareness of and Attitudes Toward Tax Support of Private Schools (in percentages of sample)

Attitudes Toward Private Schools and Public Tax Support	"Good Thing"	"Bad Thing"	No Opinion	Yes	No	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
Attitude toward increase in number of private schools in region	50	32	18								
Awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation				62	38						
Attitudes toward general tax support of private schools						34	60	6			
Attitude toward tuition tax credits									43	47	10

The following demographic factors were found to significantly affect attitudes toward the development of private schools: religion, race, educational level, political affiliation, and in what type of school the respondent's children were enrolled.

With regard to the effect of respondent's religious preference, it would be expected that those groups who have established the largest number of private schools would see the increased development of private schools as having a positive effect on education. This expectation was not supported in the data. More Methodists and Presbyterians, who have established very few private schools in this region, see the increase in the number of private schools as beneficial to education than do Baptists who have established the largest number of private schools. There are, however, differences by race among White Baptists and

Methodists and Black Baptists and Methodists. Fewer Blacks regard the increase in the number of private schools as beneficial to education. Only thirty-four percent of the total sample of Blacks compared to fifty-three percent of Whites regard the increase in the number of private schools a good thing.

Differences could also be detected in the data by the educational level of those answering the questionnaire. Overall, approximately fifty percent of the sample suggested that the increase in the number of private schools was good for education. The major differences are among those who regarded the development of private schools as having a negative effect. Ironically, those with the lowest level of schooling (less than 8th grade) and those with the highest level of education (college graduates) were similar in their responses on this point. It should be noted, however, that both Blacks and Whites with the lowest level of schooling more consistently regarded the development of private schools as undesirable.

Political affiliation appeared to be an important demographic factor related to the perceptions held concerning the increase in the number of private schools. Significantly more Republicans than Democrats saw this development as beneficial to education in the region. When political affiliation is broken down by race, other differences become apparent. More than double the number of White Republicans compared to Black Republicans regard the private school movement in a favorable manner.

Adults who have children enrolled in private schools are much more likely to believe that the increase in the number of private schools has a salutory effect on education in the region. In fact, only one adult out of the total sample with children in private schools regarded the

private school movement negatively.

Tuition tax credits is a method perceived by many as a way to further encourage the development of private schools. The tuition tax credit issue has been under intense study by both liberal and conservative groups in recent years. The Reagan administration is committed to the establishment of a tuition tax credit program. The degree of awareness and the effect of this awareness on the attitudes of adults in the study area was addressed in the survey conducted for this report.

One question relating to awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation issues was included in the research questionnaire. The responses were analyzed on the basis of the same demographic factors. Those factors which, seemed to be related to awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation were: sex, income, religion, race, educational level, age, political affiliation, and type of school in which respondents' children were enrolled.

The data indicates that males were significantly more aware than females that the U.S. Congress was considering tuition tax credit legislation. Regarding income levels of the respondents, the study shows that each incremental increase in income produced a greater awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation. When the sample was divided into low and high income groups by race and the results indicated that among both Black and White high income groups there was a much greater awareness of a proposed tuition tax credit program than among low income groups.

There was significant diversity among religious groups regarding their awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation. Presbyterians exhibited the greatest degree of awareness compared to Baptists, the group having the largest number of private schools in the study area, who indicated

the least degree of awareness. There was a greater degree of diversity of awareness exhibited among Whites by religious preference than by Blacks by religious preference. When the data was analyzed just on the basis of race, no significant differences in degree of awareness appeared. There seemed to be high corelation between levels of schooling completed and degree of awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation. While approximately two-thirds of the total sample indicated their knowledge of the proposed tuition tax credit bill, over eighty percent of college graduates claimed such knowledge. Only forty percent of those in the sample with less than 8th grade education indicated that they knew of the proposed legislation. Higher levels of schooling for Blacks did not produce the same level of awareness for Whites with the same level of schooling.

Awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation increased with each age increment included in the survey. Differences by political affiliation also became apparent when the results were analyzed. More Republicans and Independents indicated that they knew that tuition tax credit legislation had been proposed than was the case for the Democrats. These results did not hold true when the results were analyzed by race. Fewer Black Republicans knew of the proposed legislation compared to White Republicans.

It would seem that adults with school age children would have a greater vested interest in tuition tax credit legislation than adults who have no school age children. However, the data indicates that having children of school age makes little difference in the level of awareness. The type of school children were enrolled in did make a difference. Adults having children enrolled in private schools were significantly more aware

that tuition tax credit legislation had been proposed.

Since there has been much controversy over the kinds of tax support that could be legally permitted private schools, the study attempted to determine whether there was more sentiment for a general form of tax support compared to a more specific form of support such as the proposed tuition tax credit legislation. Income, religion, educational level, age, political affiliation, and type of school where children were enrolled were the demographic factors affecting attitudes toward general tax support of private schools. It should be noted that on this issue the respondents were highly opinionated. Only six percent of the total sample had no opinion on this issue. The data indicates that lower income groups tended to favor general tax support for private schools more than did higher income groups. In fact, it can be generalized that as income goes up opposition for general tax support for private schools increases. The data supports no differences in attitudes on this issue by race.

There seemed to be important differences among religious groups regarding the question of general tax support for private schools. Overall, approximately two-thirds of the sample opposed general tax support while only forty-two percent of Methodists opposed it. Also, a larger percentage of White Roman Catholics favored general tax support for private schools compared to much smaller percentages among other religious groups. As education levels of the respondents' increased, the opposition to general tax support also increased. Age was also a significant factor as indicated by the fact that young adults under twenty-five years of age were much more likely to favor general tax support for private schools.

Differences by political affiliation also appeared when the data was

analyzed. Republicans were much more likely to favor general tax support for private schools than Democrats and Independents. Having school age children did not seem to be a factor in how respondents viewed this issue. It is important to note, however, that more than double the number of those with children in private schools favored general tax support for private schools than those parents with children in public schools.

Attitudes on the question of general tax support for private schools was further analyzed based on the grades given public schools and views regarding the development of private schools. Those members of the sample who displayed negative views regarding the increase in the number of private schools overwhelmingly opposed general tax support for private schools. People who gave local public schools high grades also tended to oppose general tax support for private schools. Respondents in the survey who indicated a greater degree of awareness of the proposed tuition tax credit legislation tended to be more opposed to general tax support than those who were less aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation.

One of the primary purposes for this research project was to determine the degree of support in this region for tuition tax credit legislation under consideration by the U.S. Congress. When examining the responses of the total sample, forty-seven percent opposed tuition tax credit legislation compared to forty-three percent who favored it. Only ten percent of the sample indicated no opinion on the issue. A number of demographic factors seemed to be correlated with attitudes expressed on this issue. Males are more opinionated than females, and more males favored tuition tax credit policy than did females. High income groups were more opinionated and offered more opposition to tuition tax credit legislation,

especially high income Whites, than those with lower incomes.

There was considerable diversity among religious groups regarding attitudes toward tuition tax credits. Methodists were more strongly supportive of tuition tax credit policy than any other religious group. Baptists and Presbyterians were more opposed to the issue than Roman Catholics. A greater percentage of Blacks, compared to Whites, opposed tuition tax credit legislation. In fact, race seems to account for a large number of the demographic differences analyzed. This is different from some of the other attitudes analyzed where such factors as educational level seemed to account for variations in attitudes.

Opposition to tuition tax credit policy increased almost without exception as age increased. Young adults tend to be more favorable toward this policy concept. Approximately one-third of the Democrats in the sample compared to fifty-seven percent of Republicans favored the concept. Having children of school age was not related to views on tuition tax credit policy, but parents with children in private schools overwhelmingly supported tuition tax credit legislation compared to parents with children in public schools who were more likely to oppose the concept.

Again, several non-demographic factors were considered. Adults concerned about the increase in the number of private schools were also adamantly opposed to a tuition tax credit program. Those who gave public schools high grades also opposed tuition tax credit legislation. Those who favored general tax support for private schools favored tuition tax credit by a large majority. The data also indicated that adults who were aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation were also more likely to oppose it.

Projected Outcomes Should Tuition
Tax Credits be Adopted as Public Policy

In addition to attitudes toward public schools, private schools, general tax support and tuition tax credits, the study also focused on people's perceptions of the effect of adopting a tuition tax credit policy. These perceptions were measured in two ways: (1) what would be the effect on enrollment in private schools, and (2) would the adults who had children of school age consider moving their children from public schools to private schools. All adults in the sample were asked to express their views on the first question. The second question was limited to those adults in the sample who had children of school age. Table Three summarizes responses of survey participants on these questions.

TABLE THREE

Summary of Respondents' Perceived Effects of Adopting a Tuition Tax Credit Policy (in percentage of sample)

Perceived Outcome	Yes	No	Don't Know
Would Private School Enrollment Increase?	63	18	19
Would you consider changing children from public to private?	28	60	12

As a rule the subjects in this survey were more reluctant to offer suggestions as to how they would respond to the adoption of a tuition tax credit program than they were in expressing attitudes toward other issues addressed in this study. Nineteen percent of the sample refused to offer an opinion regarding the effect of tuition tax credit legislation on private school enrollment. Sixty-three percent believed that private school enrollment would increase. Only eighteen percent said that they believed that the passing of a tuition tax credit program would not result in an increase in enrollment in private schools.

Those demographic factors considered in analyzing the data in previous sections were also considered with respect to the questions regarding enrollment increases in private schools if tuition tax credits were adopted. Of these, income, race, educational level, and political affiliation were found to be significant factors.

It is interesting to note that as income goes up among respondents there is a greater tendency to believe that private school enrollment would increase as the result of adopting a tuition tax credit program. This was particularly true of the White adults in the sample. Only one-half of the Blacks in the sample suggested that private school enrollment would increase as compared to two-thirds of the Whites. A similar pattern was found regarding the effects of educational level on this question. Those with higher levels of schooling tended to suggest that private school enrollment would increase as a result of tuition tax credit legislation. A greater percentage of people who claim no political affiliation thought that a tuition tax credit policy would produce private school enrollment increases compared to those who claimed Republican or Democratic affiliation.

The second question dealing with respondents' perceptions focused on whether they would consider changing their children to private schools. Overall, twenty-eight percent of the adults in the sample who had school age children said that they would consider changing their children from public to private schools.

In the analyses of the data on the perceived outcomes of a tuition tax credit program three demographic factors were found to be significant variables. They were income, age, and political affiliation. Sixty-one percent of low income groups indicated a willingness to consider changing their children to private schools compared to only twenty-five percent of respondents in high income groups. Only thirteen percent of adults under the age of twenty-five would consider changing their children to private schools compared to thirty-four percent of the adults ages twenty-six through thirty-five. More Republicans would be willing to make this change in school enrollment than would Democrats. Those who claimed no political affiliation would be more likely to shift their children from public to private schools than either Democrats or Republicans. Even though not found to be satistically significant, there were apparent differences among religious groups on this issue. More Roman Catholics and Methodists would consider changing their children's place of enrollment than was the case with other religious groups considered in this study.

There seemed to be a consistency in the data regarding the attitudes expressed toward the development of private schools, tax support for private schools, grades given public schools, and perceived outcomes if a tuition tax credit program were adopted. For example, eighty-one percent of those

who viewed the increase in the number of private schools negatively would not consider changing their children's place of enrollment. Those who were opposed to both general support for private schools and a tuition tax credit policy also were adamently opposed to changing from public schools to private schools. Respondents in the survey who gave public schools high grades did not appear to entertain the thought of enrolling their children in private schools.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This research study was designed to assess attitudes toward the quality of public and private schooling in selected counties of South Carolina. The study also attempted to measure the degree of awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation, attitudes toward general tax support for private schools, acceptance or rejection of tuition tax credit policy, and perceived outcomes should such policy be adopted.

The research was designed to enable the investigators to examine the effects of several factors on respondent's attitudes and perceptions. Many conclusions could be reached from the volume of data generated. The following is an overview of the more important findings resulting from the research.

Findings Related to Grading of Schools

1. Blacks expressed less confidence in private schools than Whites.
2. Adults with children in school grade public schools much higher than other adults.
3. Older adults gave local public schools higher grades than adults under age twenty-five.
4. Religious groups that tended not to have private schools were more critical of public schools and gave them lower grades than groups that have most of the church related schools in the study region.
5. Respondents with less education gave higher grades to both public and private schools than those with more schooling.
6. Those with higher levels of schooling tended to give lower grades to all types of schools.

7. Higher income groups were more critical of public and private schools than lower income groups who tended to grade schools high.
8. Political affiliation did not appear to be an important factor affecting the grading of local schools. Republicans were more critical than other groups of schools nationally.

Awareness of Tuition Tax Credit

1. Males were more aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation than females.
2. Awareness of proposed tuition tax credit legislation increased with age.
3. The religious groups having the largest number of church related private schools were the least aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation.
4. Higher levels of schooling were correlated with greater awareness of proposed tuition tax credit policy among Whites.
5. Parents with children enrolled in private schools were more aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation than parents of children enrolled in public schools.
6. More Republicans were aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation than were Democrats.

Attitudes Toward General Aid to Private Schools

1. Younger adults are more likely to support private school aid than older adults.
2. Methodists and Catholics were more favorable to general aid to private schools than other religious groups.

3. Lower income groups viewed general aid to private schools more favorably than higher income groups.
4. Republicans were more favorable to general tax support of private schools than were Democrats or Independents.
5. Adults who gave high grades to public schools tended to be opposed to general aid to private schools.

Attitudes Toward Tuition Tax Credit Legislation

1. A larger percentage of males supported tuition tax credit legislation than did females.
2. A larger percentage of Blacks opposed tuition tax credit legislation than did Whites.
3. Younger adults were more likely to support a tuition tax credit policy than older adults.
4. Baptists and Presbyterians are more likely to be opposed to tuition tax credit legislation than Catholics and Methodists.
5. Adults with higher incomes are more likely to be opposed to tuition tax credit legislation than lower income adults.
6. More than double the number of Republicans favored tuition tax credit legislation than did Democrats.
7. Adults giving public schools high grades tended to oppose tuition tax credit legislation.
8. Adults who were aware of proposed tuition tax credit legislation tended to oppose it.
9. Forty-seven percent of the sample opposed tuition tax credit legislation compared to forty-three percent who supported it.

Perceived Effects of Adopting a Tuition Tax Credit Policy

1. A larger percentage of Whites compared to Blacks believe that private school enrollment would increase as a result of a tuition tax credit policy.
2. Young adults suggest that they would be less likely to change their children from public to private schools as a result of tuition tax credit legislation than other age groups.
3. A larger percentage of Catholics and Methodists suggest that they would consider changing their children to private schools than other religious groups.
4. Those persons with higher levels of schooling were more likely to believe that private school enrollments would increase if a tuition tax credit program were adopted than those with lower levels of education.
5. A greater percentage of persons from lower income groups would consider changing their children from public to private schools.
6. More Republicans suggested they would consider changing their children from public to private schools than other political groups.
7. Overall, twenty-eight percent of adults with school age children suggested that they would consider changing their children from public to private schools.

Perceptions Concerning the Increased Number of Private Schools in the Region

1. Those persons with the highest and lowest levels of schooling tended to agree in their perceptions that the increase in the number of

private schools would have a "bad" effect on education.

2. Methodists and Presbyterians, religious groups who have few schools in the region, viewed the increase in the number of private schools more favorably than other religious groups.
3. A greater percentage of Republicans viewed the increase in the number of private schools as a "good thing" than people affiliated with other political groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As a result of this research study it is recommended that:

1. school personnel and school policy makers identify and capitalize on the positive attitudes that a large percentage of persons have toward public schools,
2. community surveys and needs assessment programs should be used as effective devices to identify people's attitudes and perceptions about schools in each district,
3. since this research revealed that persons with a high regard for public schools have some direct relationships with a school, efforts should be made to increase these direct relationships through volunteer programs, advisory councils and other such activities,
4. school personnel and school administration view criticisms of schools in a more positive manner since it appears that the more education people have the more critically they evaluate their schools,
5. since there appear to be differences between young adults and older adults, school systems should initiate efforts to educate and inform young adults about public school policies and programs,
6. it is apparent from the results of this study that school leaders need to assess the rather profound impact that could result from the adoption of a national tuition tax credit policy.

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APPENDIX

Appendix A
School Attitude Survey

1. Using the grading scale A,B,C,D and F what grade would you give the schools in your community?

125 A 334 B 319 C 120 D 30 F 53 Don't Know

2. What grade would you give the public schools nationally?

37 A 264 B 433 C 143 D 28 F 77 Don't Know

3. From your general impression of private schools in this area what grade would you give to the private schools?

184 A 344 B 144 C 64 D 30 F 212 Don't Know

4. In recent years there has been an increase in the number of nonpublic schools in certain parts of the United States. Do you think this increase in the number of nonpublic schools is:

487 a good thing for education

314 a bad thing for education

173 no opinion

5. It has been proposed that some type of government tax money be used to help private and church related schools. Would you favor or oppose giving government tax money to help these schools?

330 favor tax support

591 oppose tax support

60 no opinion

6. Are you aware that president Reagan has submitted a tuition tax credit bill to the U.S. Congress?

610 yes 372 no

7. Let me read a brief description of that proposal:

President Reagan's proposed Educational Opportunity and Equity Act of 1982 contains the following major points:

1. By 1985, a tax credit of up to $500 on a family's annual federal income tax bill for tuition expenses paid to a private elementary or secondary school;

2. The amount of tax credit would decrease for families with annual incomes between $50,000 and $75,000. Families with incomes over $75,000 would not be eligible to participate;

3. Safeguards to assure that private schools with racially discriminatory policies or practices could not qualify to participate in the plan.

413 are you in favor of the tuition tax credits?

464 are you opposed to tuition tax credits?

103 no opinion

8. In your opinion, if this bill were passed as described, would private school enrollment increase?

617 yes 179 no 187 don't know

9. If this bill were passed would you consider changing your children from public school to a private school?

94 yes 139 no 38 don't know

1. The respondent is:

   371 Male 605 Female

2. The respondent is:

   133 Black 837 White 8 Other

3. Your age range is:

   265 under 25 280 26-35 173 36-45

   128 46-55 135 56 and over

4. What is your religious preference?

   519 Baptist 103 Presbyterian 5 Jewish

   157 Methodist 50 Roman Catholic 144 Other

5. What was the last grade you completed in school?

   36 8th grade or less 273 college attendance

   312 High School graduate 344 college graduate

6. What is the annual income range of your household?

   114 under $10,000 267 $20,000 to 30,000

   272 $10,000 to 20,000 313 above $30,000

7. Which of the following most accurately describes the Occupational Classifications of those employed in your household:

   474 professional, management 58 semi-skilled labor

   135 clerical, office, sales 12 farmer

   206 skilled labor 89 other

8. Do you have children of school age?

   328 yes 653 no

9. These children are enrolled in:

   154 public elementary school 128 public secondary school

   2 parochial elementary school 1 parochial secondary school

   22 private elementary school 11 private secondary school

10. In politics, do you consider yourself a/an:

    261 Republican 391 Democrat 236 Independent 80 Don't Know

Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Grading Local Public Schools			Grading Public Schools Nationally			Grading Local Private Schools			Development of Private Schools "Good-Bad Thing"			Favor-Oppose General Tax Support for Private Schools		
	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha
1. Sex	9.145	5	.1034	13.138	5	0.221	9.574	5	.0882	4.25	2	.1190	2.462	2	.2920
2. Income	22.936	15	.0849	45.518	15	.0001	20.914	15	.1396	10.148	6	.1186	15.707	6	.0154
a. Black	4.740	3	.1919	3.444	5	.6319	7.428	5	.1907	.051	2	.9750	1.877	2	.3912
b. White	13.148	5	.0220	28.117	5	.0001	8.373	5	.1368	2.510	2	.2851	13.003	2	.0015
3. Religion	33.682	20	.0284	19.413	20	.4951	18.927	20	.5266	17.430	8	.0259	21.447	8	.0060
By Race	48.890	45	.3196	49.230	45	.3077	56.729	45	.1128	39.522	18	.0024	33.367	18	.0151
4. Race	5.646	5	.3422	8.768	5	.1187	27.226	5	.0001	15.209	2	.0005	1.101	2	.5765
5. Education Level	30.666	15	.0097	37.793	15	.0010	52.014	15	.0001	28.538	6	.0001	15.303	6	.0180
By Race	43.175	35	.1615	57.912	35	.0084	97.883	35	.0001	53.523	14	.0001	21.073	14	.0998
6. Age	44.439	20	.0013	43.139	20	.0020	18.676	20	.5430	12.962	8	.1132	19.307	8	.0133
7. Politics	19.200	15	.2048	34.898	15	.0025	23.759	15	.0693	15.812	6	.0148	16.028	6	.0136
By Race	33.666	35	.5324	54.129	35	.0132	59.200	35	.0065	29.107	14	.0101	19.791	14	.1369
8. Views on Increase in Number of Private Schools	20.641	10	.0237	10.597	10	.3897	32.058	10	.0001				106.690	4	.0001
9. Attitude Toward General Tax Support of Schools	16.723	10	.0807	20.908	10	.0217	57.990	10	.0001	106.690	4	.0001			
10. Awareness of Tuition Tax Credits	3.166	5	.6744	15.892	5	.0072	6.273	5	.2805	7.683	2	.0215	6.767	2	.0339
11. Attitude Toward Tuition Tax Credits	23.327	10	.0096	18.654	10	.0449	45.263	10	.0001	194.422	4	.0001	278.007	4	.0001
12. Having School Age Children	22.412	5	.0004	4.747	5	.4475	5.853	5	.3200	2.391	2	.3025	2.500	2	.2865
13. Whether Children Enrolled in Public or Private Schools										28.240	2	.0001	23.251	2	.0001
14. Children Enrolled in Public School	15.279	5	.0092	12.114	5	.0333	28.499	5	.0001	5.216	2	.0737	9.771	2	.0076
15. Children Enrolled in Private School															
16. Grades Given Local Public Schools				60.652	5	.0001	4.433	5	.4889						

X^2 = Chi Square Ratio
DF = Degrees of Freedom
Alpha = Probability of Significance (P= <0.05)

SUMMARY OF STATISTICAL DATA
Appendix B, Page One

Dependent Variables

Independent Variables	Aware of Tuition Tax Credits Bill			Favor-Oppose Tuition Tax Credits			Would Private School Enrollment Increase If Tuition Credit Bill Passed			Consider Changing Children To Private Schools		
	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha	X^2	DF	Alpha
1. Sex	5.945	1	.0148	13.141	1	.0014	1.350	2	.5092	3.792	2	0.1501
2. Income	42.638	3	.0001	29.915	6	.0001	23.547	6	.0006	0.812	6	0.1842
a. Black	3.060	1	.082	1.030	2	.5974	.812	2	.6662	0.032	2	0.9840
b. White	27.917	1	.0001	12.020	2	.0025	7.780	2	.0204	9.920	2	0.0070
3. Religion	19.107	4	.0007	25.517	8	.0013	11.856	8	.1577	11.960	8	0.1530
By Race	23.908	9	.0044	44.684	18	.0005	24.699	18	.1334	20.011	16	0.2197
4. Race	1.928	1	.1650	12.972	2	.0015	9.711	2	.0078	0.572	2	0.7514
By Race	70.132	7	.0001	48.003	14	.0001	31.518	14	.0047	19.055	14	0.1628
5. Education Level	79.377	3	.0001	32.502	6	.0001	19.124	6	.0040	7.316	6	0.2926
By Race	79.132	7	.0001	48.003	14	.0001	31.518	14	.0047	19.055	14	0.1628
6. Age	43.786	4	.0001	32.466	8	.0001	21.497	8	.0059	7.087	8	0.5272
7. Politics	25.786	4	.0001	32.466	8	.0001	21.497	8	.0059	7.087	8	0.5272
By Race	28.987	7	.0001	61.648	14	.0001	22.806	14	.0635			
8. Views on Increase in Number of Private Schools	7.683	2	.0215	194.422	4	.0001	45.951	4	.0001	64.880	4	0.0001
9. Attitude Toward General Tax Support of Schools				278.514	4	.0006	19.514	4	.0006	64.832	4	0.0001
10. Awareness of Tuition Tax Credits	6.767	2	.0039	46.543	2	.0001	7.828	2	.0200	0.635	2	0.7279
11. Attitude Toward Tuition Tax Credit	46.543	2	.0001				78.551	4	.0001	68.718	4	0.0001
12. Having School Age Children	.321	1	.5687	1.064	2	.5874	2.511	2	.2850			
13. Whether Children Enrolled in Public or Private School	12.091	1	.0005	34.428	2	.0001	.788	2	.6742			
14. Children Enrolled in Public School	2.398	1	.1215	11.891	2	.0026	.171	2	.9182			
15. Children Enrolled in Private School										31.122	2	0.0001
16. Grades Given Local Public Schools										16.223	2	0.0003

X^2 = Chi Square Ratio
DF = Degrees of Freedom
Alpha = Probability of Significance ($P = < 0.05$)

SUMMARY OF STATISTICAL DATA
Appendix B, Page Two